

BOOKS IN REVIEW

Studies in Disaster

STRATEGIC SURRENDER: THE POLITICS OF VICTORY AND DEFEAT. By PAUL KECSKEMETI. Stanford University Press. 289 pp. \$5.00.

Reviewed by GORDON A. CRAIG

FEW criticisms of Western leadership during World War II have been accepted more uncritically than the charge that the war was unnecessarily prolonged by insistence upon the unconditional surrender of Germany. Rarely accompanied by any supporting evidence more substantial than those passages in Goebbels' diary in which the doctor said he *hoped* to use the "unconditional surrender" formula to strengthen the German will to resistance, this statement has become a shibboleth of military writers. It is high time that someone took the pains to show that it is contrary to fact and, indeed, to logic; and Paul Kecskemeti deserves credit for having done so.

In a careful study of the German surrender of 1945—one of the four case studies in this interesting and original book—Mr. Kecskemeti points out that the principal causes of the prolongation of German resistance were, first, Hitler's flat refusal to countenance the idea of capitulation—a refusal dictated by his belief that, if the German people lost the war, they would have no right to future existence—and, second, the fact that, as long as Hitler was alive, military loyalty prevented his commanders from seeking surrender. Unconditional surrender had very little influence, for example, on the determination of General von Rundstedt to go on fighting even after the situation on the western front had become hopeless. He refused to try to negotiate on his own initiative with Allied commanders because, as one of his staff has written, "his military upbringing ruled that out" and because "no one can jump over his own shadow."

After Hitler had committed suicide, the unconditional surrender formula does not seem

to have had any effect on the course adopted by German soldiers. Indeed, as soon as they were freed from their oath to the Führer, German commanders made strenuous efforts to capitulate to the Western powers, while seeking to avoid surrender to the Russians. Yet it was the Western powers who were insistent upon unconditional surrender, whereas the Russians used much more attractive language in their appeals to the Germans. All of this leads to the inescapable conclusion that unconditional surrender had no real effect on the doggedness of German resistance and the duration of the war; and the idea that a different formula or slogan would have shortened the conflict appreciably is, therefore, a myth. It is a myth which has won credence because we have all fallen under the spell of Madison Avenue psychology, to the extent of believing that word-manipulation determines human conduct. As Mr. Kecskemeti writes: "Addicted to a naive stimulus-response philosophy, we tend to take it for granted that people's actions depend on nothing but the momentary stimuli they receive, stimuli that we, the manipulators, can control at will." History, to say nothing of current events, gives little basis for this easy belief.

ARE we then to conclude that unconditional surrender was a desirable and effective policy? Not in Mr. Kecskemeti's view. He believes—and this is the main point of his book—that it had unfortunate effects after the fighting phase of the war proper was over and the time had come to arrange a surrender. The Allies were prevented from "handling surrender situations in the most efficient and expeditious manner" by what he calls "the rules of unconditionality." They had resolved that, when it came time for the enemy to treat, there must be no dealings with enemy leaders except to instruct them about details of orderly capitulation (the "no-negotiation" rule) and further, that immediately after capitulation the enemy leaders would cease to exercise political authority and no other leaders would be recognized (the "no-

recognition" or "vacuum" rule). In practice, these rules had unfortunate effects.

How unfortunate the author illustrates with studies of the Italian surrender negotiations of 1943, the Japanese surrender of 1945 and—for purposes of comparison—the Franco-German armistice negotiations of 1940. In the last of these, Mr. Kecskemeti argues, both parties were entirely realistic, both were thinking of the benefits to be gained from a quick solution, both recognized that the surrender of a power that possesses residual strength involves concessions from the victor, and the armistice was, as a result, attained with a minimum of difficulty. In the other cases, difficulty was made inevitable by Allied rigidity and insistence that all bargaining be ruled out as a matter of principle. In the Italian case, the "no-recognition" rule—specifically, reluctance to recognize the authority of the Badoglio regime—was the principal source of confusion. In the case of Japan, the "no-negotiation" rule was crucial, and failure to establish direct and confidential channels of communication with the Japanese government left that government under illusions which prevented a quick settlement. In neither case was the resultant delay of more than a few weeks' duration; the main damage done to the Allied cause by holding to the rules of unconditionality was that it enabled third parties to make gains at our expense. In Italy, the Germans were able to strengthen their position in and around Rome; in Japan, the Soviet Union, whose intervention in the Far Eastern war might have been forestalled by quicker agreement, was the real beneficiary.

Historians will probably have some fault to find with details in Mr. Kecskemeti's case studies. His discussion of the Italian surrender suffers from an inadequate account of the Cassibile talks, and this weakens his treatment of the projected American air-drop at Rome; he seems also to underestimate the unfortunate political effects which Allied negotiations with Badoglio and the House of Savoy were bound to have in the United States and England, as well as in the captive countries. Neither Mr. Churchill nor President Roosevelt dared underestimate them; and this explains their behavior. In his treatment of the Japanese situation, Mr. Kecskemeti argues that the dropping of the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki "made no essential contribution to Japan's surrender without a last battle." This is hard to believe and is not made any easier by the fact

that, in seeking to prove it, the author seems, to this reader, to become involved in a maze of qualifications and contradictions.

But these are matters which do not affect his main argument or the conclusions he draws from it. The coming of nuclear weapons has changed a lot of things, and the kind of strategy that guided both military operations and political negotiations in World War II is hardly suited to the new conditions. "Powers may seek to survive in the nuclear age," Mr. Kecskemeti writes, "either by going to extremes of inhumanity and malevolence never imagined before, or by drastically limiting their expectations of gain from the application of armed power." It is not to be expected that the United States will resort to the first alternative. Forced to rely on the other, Americans will have to perform the painful but necessary task of overcoming traditional attitudes, like the rejection of compromise, the reliance on inflexible rules, and the refusal to adjust positions once taken, which marked their conduct of the surrender negotiations of the last war.

Israel and the Arabs

BACKDROP TO TRAGEDY: THE STRUGGLE FOR PALESTINE. By WILLIAM R. POLK, DAVID M. STAMLER, and EDMUND ASFOUR. Beacon. 399 pp. \$4.95.

ISRAEL AND THE MIDDLE EAST. By HARRY B. ELLIS. Ronald. 260 pp. \$4.00.

MULTITUDES IN THE VALLEY: CHURCH AND CRISIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. By DENIS BALY. Seabury. 307 pp. \$5.00.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST: FROM THE RISE OF ISLAM TO MODERN TIMES. By GEORGE E. KIRK. 4th edition. 308 pp. \$5.00.

Reviewed by J. C. HUREWITZ

THREE of the four books under review focus on the Arab-Israel dispute. All three rest on a premise which no thoughtful person would contest: the frictions and barriers that divide Israel from its Arab neighbors antedate the expiry in mid-May 1948 of the British Mandate for Palestine. All three, moreover, contend—explicitly or implicitly—that the Arab-Israel dispute, or what some still call the Palestine problem, is the prime unsettling force in the